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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ADDIS ABABA 003337

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/13/2017  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PBTS](#) [MOPS](#) [KPKO](#) [ET](#) [ER](#) [SO](#)  
SUBJECT: ETHIOPIA: UN A/SYG FOR PEACEKEEPING MULET ON  
BORDER DEMARCATION AND SOMALIA

Classified By: Political/Economic Chief Michael Gonzales for Reasons 1.  
4 (b)

11. (C//NF) SUMMARY. On November 8 PolCouns and Poloff attended a "Friends of UNMEE" meeting where newly appointed UN Assistant Secretary General for Peacekeeping (A/SYG) Edmond Mulet briefed the resident diplomatic community on his views of the Ethiopian-Eritrean border situation and Somalia. Mulet, who was on a familiarization trip to the region, said that in his view demarcation of the Ethiopian-Eritrean border by geographic coordinates would not fulfill the Eritrea-Ethiopia Border Commission's (EEBC) mandate. He also stated that if the EEBC were to be disbanded, the UN would be available to assist with any post-EEBC process. Ethiopian Prime Minister told Mulet in a November 7 meeting that Ethiopia would not start a war with Eritrea even if provoked. On Somalia, Mulet made it clear that the UN would not send peacekeepers unless the situation improved and there was a peace to keep. He offered that a multinational force authorized by the UN might be a better option in the near term. The A/SYG also noted that the African Union (AU) was preparing to engage diplomatically on both the Ethiopian-Eritrean border issue and Somalia. END SUMMARY.

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UNSC SHOULD NOT ENDORSE EEBC "VIRTUAL DEMARCATION"  
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12. (C//NF) Mulet opened by commenting that in his personal opinion demarcation of the Ethiopian-Eritrean border by geographic coordinates would not fulfill the EEBC's mandate and that the UNSC should not endorse the EEBC's decision. Rather, the EEBC's job was not complete until pillars had been placed on the ground. He further remarked that both parties want demarcation on the ground. Mulet also personally believed that the Ethiopian government wanted the EEBC to fade away opening the door to a new and as yet undefined mechanism for resolving the differences between the two countries.

13. (C//NF) Mulet said the UNSC should advise the EEBC that any endorsement of demarcation by coordinates would alienate Ethiopia. He thought that either the parties should take the November decision as a non-event or the UNSC should convince the EEBC to postpone its decision to give the process more time. He suggested that the focus should also begin to shift

to the post-November period when the international community, in conjunction with the parties, should look at post-EEBC mechanisms. The UK Ambassador cautioned that the international community should not give the Ethiopians the impression that the demise of the EEBC is acceptable. Mulet responded that if the EEBC were to disband, the UN would be available to assist with any new process.

14. (C//NF) The A/SYG announced that he was to visit Eritrea on November 9 and that he had already secured permission from the Eritrean government to travel overland to the Temporary Security Zone. He interpreted Asmara's acquiescence to his visit as a positive sign and he felt there might be a small window of opportunity for the UN to repair its relationship with Eritrea. He further commented that positive language by the Eritrean PermRep to the UN along the lines of "letting bygones be bygones," "starting a new track," and "starting a new relationship with the UN" reflected the possibility of a new opening in engaging Asmara positively on the border.

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MELES: ETHIOPIA WILL NOT START WAR  
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15. (C//NF) Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles told Mulet in a meeting on November 7 that Ethiopia would not start war with Eritrea even if provoked. Mulet said he delivered a message of restraint to the Ethiopian government, but he assessed that the GOE was building a deterrent force along the Eritrean border rather than preparing to launch an offensive.

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NO PEACE TO KEEP IN SOMALIA  
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16. (C//NF) Mulet emphasized that there must be a peace to keep in Somalia before a UN peacekeeping mission could be deployed. He stated unless certain preconditions were met, including improved security and political negotiations between Somalia's Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and its opponents, it would be impossible to deploy UN peacekeepers. He underscored that the UN had been unable to send in a technical assessment mission because of insecurity and he said that other than Uganda and Burundi, no country wants to contribute troops. Mulet did respond defensively when questioned about the UN's contingency planning for a UN PKO to Somalia noting that the Somalia Task Force continues to plan for options of what could be done, including unconventional options such as basing a PKO's headquarters off-shore to enhance security. He added that for the time being the UN would assist the AU and he commented that a multi-national force authorized by the UNSC, but not led by the UN, might be a more realistic way to improve the situation in the near term.

17. (C//NF) Ethiopian State Minister of Foreign Affairs Tekeda Alemu told Mulet in a meeting the week of November 4 that Ethiopia would withdraw its forces from Somalia by the end of 2007 or in early 2008 if the situation did not improve. In Mulet's view, the Ethiopians were becoming increasingly frustrated with the lack of political progress in Somalia. The Ethiopians also complained to Mulet that they were disappointed with the lack of support from the international community for Ethiopia's role in assisting the TFG.

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AU PREPARING TO ENGAGE ON ET-ER BORDER AND SOMALIA  
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18. (C//NF) AU Chairman Konare told Mulet in a separate meeting the week of November 4 that the AU was laying the groundwork for an initiative to engage Prime Minister Meles and Eritrean President Isaias on the border issue. Konare

told Mulet he was going to talk to Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa, and Algeria to gain support for the project. Konare preferred that the EEBC postpone its November decision to give time for his diplomatic initiative.

¶9. (C//NF) Konare also planned to engage on Somalia by holding a key stakeholders meeting in Addis Ababa on December 12-13 to mobilize the international community, according to Mulet. The members of the International Somali Contact Group (ICG) for Somalia would be invited, but there was division within the AU on whether to invite Ethiopia and Eritrea. Some AU leaders felt the two countries must be part of the solution, but other leaders disagreed. (A subsequent diplomatic note from the AU to ICG members gave the dates as December 13 for the ICG meeting and December 14 for high level meetings focusing on Somalia.)

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COMMENT  
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¶10. (C//NF) The Ethiopian government's frustrations with the lack of political progress in Somalia are clear, but Post has no indication that the Ethiopian military is preparing to withdraw from Somalia this year. Senior Ethiopian officials for now continue to recognize the importance of the Ethiopian military in propping up the TFG. END COMMENT.  
YAMAMOTO